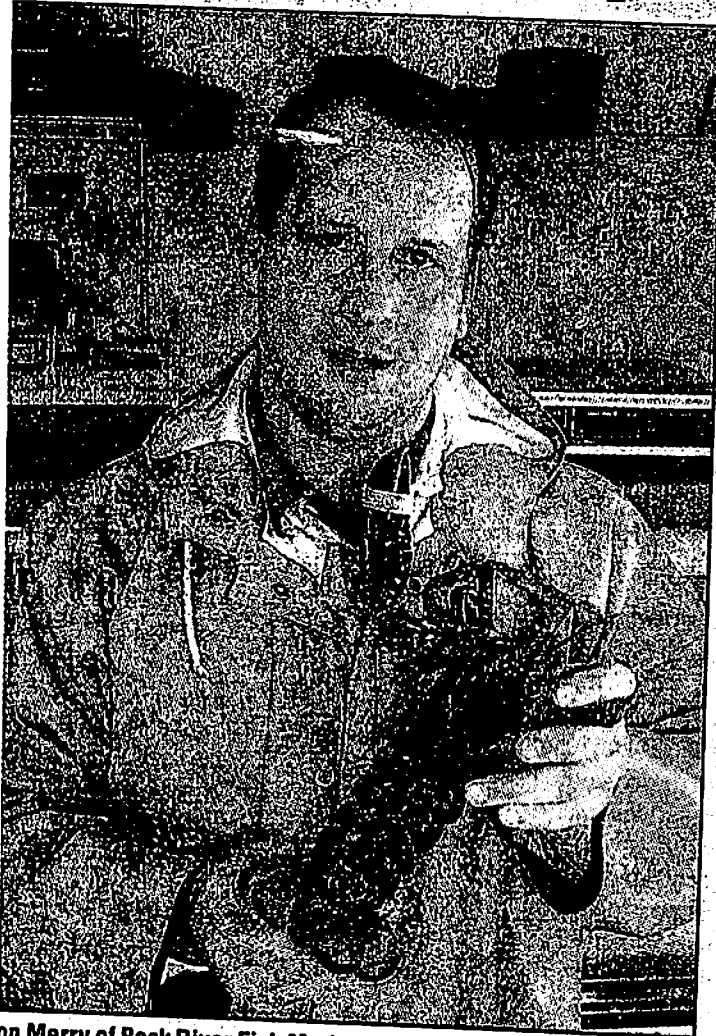


## Blue Plate Special...



Don Merry of Back River Fish Market plans to bring "Lefty" to Woods Hole marine scientists this week.

### Fisherman Nets Rare Blue Lobster

By PAULA MAXWELL

It happens only once in a blue moon -- or more precisely, once in three million, according to marine scientists.

The blue lobster at Back River Fish Market has been drawing attention ever since it was delivered by local fisherman Rich Tower, who caught the crustacean in Cape Cod Bay about a week and a half ago.

Senior Aquarist Scott Van Sant at Woods Hole National Marine Fisheries Science Aquarium said Monday that the phenomenon, known as a colormorph, is most likely a genetic mutation that deprives the lobster of an enzyme which produces the pigmentation common to other lobsters.

Back River customers have been coming in all week to see "Lefty" as she has been named. Owner Don Merry, plans to deliver the cobalt blue one-and-a-quarter pounder with one claw to Woods Hole marine scientists this week.

Two years ago Merry delivered a two-tone lobster and in 1994, another blue lobster

### What are the odds?

Red Sox winning 2001 World Series	18 to 1
Patriots winning Super Bowl	30 to 1
Winning Mass. daily numbers game	10,000 to 1
Drawing a royal flush	649,740 to 1
Finding a blue lobster	3 million to 1
Dying from a snake bite	3.9 million to 1
Getting struck by lightning	4.2 million to 1

Sources: 1-2 Las Vegas Sportsline 3- Mass. State Lottery 4- houseofodds.com 5- Woods Hole Fisheries National Marine Aquarium 6-7- National Safety Council

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# Blue Plate Special...

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but never, according to Merry, has he seen one with such a bright blue shell.

Van Sant said that the lobster had most likely probably just molted, a process where it casts off its shell, periodically as it grows.

He said the Back River addition will probably be put in a display tank at the Woods Hole research laboratory with other colormorphs or isolated until its other claw regenerates. He said lobsters can lose a claw if they are handled or can voluntarily detach a limb as a protection technique to escape.

Through a process known as regeneration, the body part may

develop and appear during the next molt. The replacement part is small at first and enlarges with successive molts.

Merry said he sees the beginning of a new claw on Lefty and that she was without a limb when she was caught.

Last week he brought the lobster into his wife, Sonja's third grade class at Alden. "I got a good laugh before I showed the lobster when I asked the class how many had ever seen a blue lobster and all these hands went up."

Van Sant said Lefty will join other colormorphs in shades of calico, yellow, orange, white and red. He said her exceptionally bright blue color will make her stand out.

Blue pigmentation is sometimes genetic and sometimes due to a dietary deficiency such as lack of shellfish in the diet, said Van Sant. The primary pigment in American lobsters is astaxanthin, a red pigment. In cool temperatures, this red pigment combines with other proteins in the shell and takes on the color of the proteins. Cooked lobsters turn red because heat destroys the structure of the proteins attached to a red pigment and once free of the protein, the true color comes out.

Anthony D'Agostino, a marine biologist in New York, is the founder of a privately funded three year old research effort called the Blue Lobster Project and reports that boiling a blue lobster creates a pinkish color with the meat tasting the same as any other lobster.

But Lefty won't have to worry about becoming the "blue plate special", Van Sant said. She'll join the other colormorphs at the Woods Hole science aquarium and could live happily as long as 30 years.